The Search for Loveliness

G. Rostrevor Hamilton

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The Search for Loveliness

And Other Verses

The Search for Loveliness

And Other Verses

By

G. Rostrevor Hamilton

London: John Long, Limited
Norris Street, Haymarket
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First Published in 1910

TO

MY FATHER AND

MOTHER

My thanks are due to the Editors of *The Westminster Gazette*, *Country Life*, *The Oxford Magazine*, *The Isis*, *The Bradfield College Chronicle*, and *The Stapeldon Magazine*, for permission to publish some of these verses, which have appeared in their pages.

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The Search for Loveliness

THE SEARCH FOR LOVELINESS

I

From East to West the waters of the sea
  Far wandering no other isle embrace
So blest as mine with fair humility.
  She taught me by the yearning of her face
  To see in all her loveliness the trace
Of Loveliness eternal, undefiled.
  Her changing moods were mirrors to the grace
Of that which changes not; for like a child
In simple grief she wept, in simple gladness smiled.

In tears and smiles I loved her, for I felt
  My heart was one with hers in joy and pain,
And so in sweet communion we dwelt,
  Until she bade me voyage o'er the main

To see that beauty innocent of stain
Whose presence she had taught. But far and wide
I only found the yearning to attain :
Loud cataracts and soaring mountains cried
Their yearning for perfection still unsatisfied.

Now yet again we sought the world's desire
(For many with me sought), our faces pale
But kindled with a calm, unsleeping fire
As men whose hope is sure. For setting sail
We never feared the bold emprise could fail
To crown us with the triumph of our quest,
But over ocean, driven by the gale,
We still pressed onward, on from crest to crest
Of ocean's rolling billows, never seeking rest.

So ship from ship was parted ; now each crew
Was solitary left, but yet our dream
Fled on before us, yet within our view
Came naught but ocean ; till one night a gleam
Of light upon the distant dark did seem

To widen and approach. Day came and lo!
We sailed toward a harbour on a stream
Of water silky-smooth. The sun did throw
Upon that crystal sea his rosy orient glow.

II

To land we glided through the quiet bay,
And there we parted, and alone I went
To seek my heart's desire. Before me lay
A grassy hill; sweet harmonies of scent
Upon the trancéd air were lightly blent,
All intermingled by the loving toil
Of tender winds. I clomb the high ascent,
A path which wound in many a subtle coil
Through banks of dewy grass and flower-inwoven soil.

Below me lay a city fair and free.
Around it valleys undulating spread
To meet the hills as far as eye could see.
In silver ribands down the vales there sped
Two shining rivers, bountifully fed

The Search for Loveliness

By tumbling streams, which welcomed with a flash
The sunlight on their merry-making shed.
Now would they pause, now with a frolic dash
Into the river-bed full noisily would plash.

In truth it was a vision of delight,
To drive away the memory of pain,
And fill the heart with gladness, such a sight
As many seeing would not wish again
Homeward to turn, but rather to remain
In ceaseless joyance. Yet the vision wrought
Far otherwise on me; for I would fain
Have seen some loveliness beyond all thought.
A vision not of earth, beyond all dreams I sought.

Then here before me had I found the goal
Of all my longing? Did I truly gaze
On her who won the worship of my soul—
I, who in thought had trembled at the blaze
Of beauty yet concealed? As in a maze
Of doubt I questioned, lo! each hue forsook
The landscape—not commingled in a haze

Yet grey as mist. Wherever I might look,
Streams, meadows, city, all the same dull vesture took.

The false-enchanted isle with every warm
Colour of life abundantly had shone,
And now was left only the hollow form
Where no life lingered. All its lustre gone,
It lay a desert, cold and grey as stone.
Aloud in sore bewilderment I cried,
But in the waste of death I stood alone,
And no voice answered. Then rebellious pride
With indignation strove my fear to override.

III

And once again I cried, a bitter cry,
"If anything remaineth true and fair
O let it be revealed before I die."
Silent I waited in a dull despair.
Till lo ! in answer to my rebel prayer
I saw the earth awaken with a blush
Of life renewed, and on the trembling air

The Search for Loveliness

A flood of radiance with a swift onrush
Through every hollow shade in flaming beauty
flush.

Now was the earth, a moment gone so dim,
Transfigured by that wondrous alchemy
With unimprisoned light to overbrim.
As, when the moon majestic passes by,
Clouds that have lain like shadows on the sky,
Drifting along disconsolate and cold,
Brim over with new splendour; now they fly
With gleaming wings about her, and unfold
Her floods of silver sheen, joyous and swift and bold.

Eager my spirit mingled in the glow,
And all my being into rapture burned,
Nor needed I interpreter to know
The face of her, for whom my soul had yearned
Made visible before me. I discerned
Her I had sought in toil and many tears
In one swift moment, and my pride was turned
To joyful wonder; vanishéd my fears,
And grew to perfect bloom the hope of all my years.

Yet only for a moment passing swift
The long-desiréd loveliness I saw.
Enough for me that I had dared to lift
My eyes upon her face,—with joyful awe
A faint reflection of her light to draw
Into my shadowed soul. Thereby I knew
Some fragment of the everlasting law,
How she reveals her own celestial hue,
Wandering here on earth, far from her dwelling true.

IV

No compass can I show nor chart to guide
The toil-worn mariner. But far or near
One day his vessel suddenly shall glide
Into a solitary island. There
To him alone the vision shall appear.
Perchance when beauties that enchain the sense
Fade into nothingness, and cruel fear
Makes every beauty seem a false pretence,
Then to his lonely soul shall come the recompense.

The Search for Loveliness

For even so to many lands I sailed,
And in a solitary island found
Her whom I sought at last. There she unveiled
Her perfect likeness on the common ground,
And with one flaming revelation crowned
My lifelong hope; a momentary spell
The viler substance of the earth had bound
Her glory not to mar. Yet knew I well
Perfect upon this earth her presence might not dwell.

For many guises Loveliness doth borrow
In earthly dross her soul divine to drape,
And when she visits our domain of Sorrow,
The home of Jealousy, Revenge and Rape,
Her outward presence cannot all escape
The close contagion of the world's alloy.
If any splendour shines in earthly shape,
'Tis her indwelling, and when deathless Joy
The shadow-world of Time shall utterly destroy,

And when we come, far-wandered souls of men,
Into her haven cradled in the sea

The Search for Loveliness

Of blue sky circumambient,—again
Shall Loveliness from mortal taint be free,
Eternally made one, no more to be
The solace of our sorrow, nor apart
To dwell on Earth. Then Immortality
Shall set her seal upon the Maker's art.
And satisfy the cry of man's created heart.

Too weak are we to gaze upon the sun ;
The stars are fitter for our mortal sight.
On heaven's dark abyss their web is spun,
Embroidering the hemisphere of night
With clear-cut gems, whose undiffuséd light
Dazzles us not. For though the stars do teem
Innumerous, not all the sky is bright ;
Yet when the sun goes forth, alone, supreme,
Lo ! all the universe is flooded with his beam.

The lights of Loveliness, like scattered stars
Hung in the canopy of darkness, shine.
Still it is Night. Still with her prison-bars
She hems the fire, whose burning shall refine
The dross of Earth. Then Loveliness divine

The Search for Loveliness

To them who seek her shall be manifest.
Yet may we now, now at her earthly shrine,
With perfect vision of her light be blest
A moment—ere it rise and shine from East to West.

HOPE

(*A Poem for the New Year.*)

Take Hope to be
  Thy companie,
    And keep her by thy side.
For never Fear
  May come too near,
    If Hope do be thy bride.

And though She bring
  None other thing
    To thee than her own self,
And do not bless
  Thee with success
    Or prize of golden pelf.

And though the blind
  By Chance do find

The Search for Loveliness

The treasure thou has sought,
Yet do not grieve,
Or make believe
That Hope availeth nought.

Still with thee lies
The greater prize,
For better is it worth
Fair Hope to hold,
Than any gold
Or treasure of this earth.

MORNING JOY

Joy, joy,
Joy of the glittering morn !
Drooping mist of the morn !
Sparkling dew of the morn !
Each spider's web is a jewelled net,
A firmament set
With stars,
Aglow
With the light the sunbeams throw
In quivering golden bars.
Gold and blue in a floating maze
Of silver mist—
Diamond points that suddenly blaze
Out of the vapours' curl and twist—
Joy of the sunlit haze,
Sunlit haze of the morn !

TWILIGHT REST

Dripping with dew the twilight steals over valley
and over wold,
Gathers each hue that shone therein, masses them
all in a curve of gold,
Scarlet gliding into gold, far away over the
West.

Wandering eyes have all day scanned wandering
visions, that falsely seem
Visions of truth; now wandering eyes learn they
were little but shade and dream,
Rainbow shadows, swift to die;—wandering
eyes may rest.

LINES TO SLEEP (*Suggested by "The Winged* 'ΥΠΝΟΣ").

Pure is the darkness and pure is the light.
Clear is the moon and the shadows lie deep;
All that is pure, that is lovely in night,
Flows in the flood of thy beauty, O Sleep.

Clouds of ambrosial dew in thy wing:
Deep in thine eyes an ineffable shade;
Thine are the radiant visions that spring
One from another, then mingle and fade.

Fadeth the daylight, and sinketh the sun:
Breathe on us, Sleep, with the balm of thy breath;
And, when the day of our life shall be done,
Like unto thee be thy twin-brother Death.

THE FALL OF JEMSHID

"They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The coasts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep."
The "Rubáiyát" of Omar Khayyám.

So from the vaulted roof a maze of lights
Flashed on the pomp of Persia. Multitudes
Made merry to the sound of lute and harp,
And minstrels sang melodious chants of praise,
That floated down the royal banquet-hall,
Past Jemshid's lofty throne;—a throne more fair
Than mortal man might fashion or conceive.
For that old Dæmon, mountain-dwelling race,
Late vanquished by Tahumers, toiling long,
In pearly panels radiantly set
Innumerous jewels; there the amethyst
Mingled its purple sheen with mellow gold
Of onyx, and the gleam of diamonds
With deep blue sapphire and the ruddy flame
Of rubies interpenetrating shone.
As from the eyes of some fair Persian maid

The Fall of Jemshid

In Tehistan or old Persepolis,
Full-rayed but melting-soft the lustre wells
Through tranquil deeps unfathomed, and they glow
Serenely, till some lightning touch of thought
Speeds a quick, dancing twinkle to their gaze,
And men know not which were more beautiful,
The calm effulgence or the kindling fire.
So from these gems soft moonlight glories flooded,
Blent with the starry, nor could soul of man
Ever be sated of the marvel rare ;
And all the palace was of Dæmon art,
Rising to domes and lofty pinnacles.
But Jemshid's heart was swollen with vain pride.
Full often down the dazzling hall he glanced,
Over the multitudes that owned his sway,
And so it came to pass that he bade call
The wisest men of Persia, counsellors,
Rulers, magicians, soothsayers and bards,
And spake with foolish boasting, for the heart
Of great Tahumers' son was lifted up.
" Magicians, counsellors and princes, hear !
Am I not greatest, happiest and best
Of all that e'er had life delectable ?

Behold my works. What wonders have I wrought
Throughout the land of Persia, who alone
Have welded all of strong and beautiful
Together in one perfect harmony.
Have I not showered blessings far and wide?
Am I not happiest and best of men?"
Then all the princes, counsellors and bards
Made answer: "True, O king, be all thy words.
Thou art the greatest, thou the best of men.
On thee the gods bestow all happiness,"
And all the people cried with one accord
"All happiness on thee the gods bestow."
But even as they cried, a shadow passed
Over the palace, and an ashy grey
Swept stealthily along the glowing walls
And blotted all their glory into gloom.
Then every scintillating jewel smouldered
Into dull ashes; every gaudy light
Flickered to ghostly dimness; pale with fear
Cold, silent faces answered silent eyes,
And even Jemshid on his royal throne
Sat like a statue, cold, immovable.

The Fall of Jemshid

Only from far away a whirring sound,
As of wings slipping softly through the night,
Came nearer, nearer: till a mighty voice
Rang through the darkness like a deep-toned bell
Shuddering into sound. "Great Jemshid, hear.
Because thy foolish heart was lifted up,
To vaunt thy power, forgetting whence it came,
Henceforth that Heaven, which did raise thee high,
Shall make thy foes to triumph over thee,
Till thou be trampled even to the dust."
So spake the angel; and men's tongues were loosed,
And a low murmur ran through all the throng.
But Jemshid hastily departed thence,
For he was sore afraid. And from that day
His glory vanished: the angel's doom
Smote sore upon him, for he died a death
Most miserable, in a foreign land.

SOUL TO SOUL SPEAKETH.

Treasure new each day I find,
To whose beauty I was blind
In thy presence yesterday.
So that I could almost yearn
At once, without this sweetness of delay,
All secrets of thy loveliness to learn.

No, I may not learn the whole
Secret of thy lovely soul:
Yet for ever will I dwell
In my joy serene and sure,
Knowing thee like a deep and stainless well,
But only more unfathomably pure.

THE VOTARY

Joyfully, Bacchus, lord,
Calling upon thy name,
Brandishing high the flame,
We swept on over the sward.

For fierce was the song
Of the Mænad throng,
And fierce was the gleam
Of their glorious eyes.
Ah! yet in a dream
I thrill to their cries,
Yet seem to gaze
On the wild triumphant faces halo'd in the torches' blaze.

Gone is the glow of night,
Come is the gloom of day.
Cold is the morn, and grey,
Oh grey is the morning light.

The Search for Loveliness

No rioters pass
On the velvet grass,
No gleam of an eye,
No dusk lock dishevelled,
No wild triumph-cry,
No sign of them that revelled,
No maddened heat,
Nor the flashing and the whirling of a thousand dancers' feet.

THE CHANT OF THE DREAMERS

Come where the breeze is warm
With fragrant sighs of love.
Come, shelter from the storm.

The blue sky smiles above,
The summer wraps us round
With murmurs of sweet sound.

Forget the toil of Earth,
The striving after fame,
The mockery of mirth.

Forget the sudden shame,
The darkness and the fear,
The shadow of the year.

The Search for Loveliness

For waking is a dream
  Here in our land of rest,
And very sweet we deem,

  That never mocking jest
Shatters the golden spell.
O come with us to dwell.

THE PORTRAIT

(A Soliloquy.)

My picture! seated there in calm repose,
With face inscrutable, impassive eyes
That tell no secret to the world. 'Tis well.
It shall be hung in some long corridor
Or spacious banquet-hall. Those eyes shall look
The same through generations,—give no hint
Of passions darker and more pitiless
Than any in the active-seeming throng
Who pass below it. Some will pause to think,
'Tis but a face much like to other faces
Of them who lived in those half-buried times,
The same white lofty forehead, eyebrows dark
And curving up like semicircles, lips
Too thin and straight, and nose too regular
For human flesh and blood. Aye, some will mock
The mockery they think me, drink my health
With pleasant, foolish smiles, and feel a vague
Superiority, because they live
While I am but a shadow; or dismay

Shall cloud their foolish fancy, seeing me
Disdainfully appearing to reproach
Their restless ways. True, such solemnity,
Saving to hide tumultuous desire,
Was never mine, and when I see the like
My only longing is to break its calm,
To pull the smug-faced idol of content
Down from its pedestal.
Yet glad am I
My artist lacked the genius to mark
The subtler shades that separate a man,
And fix the likeness of a human soul;
For so I'll be a puzzle to the world,
If any seek to know me. Learnéd men
Shall find a story garnished by my foes
With every dark refinery of crime,
Seeming to prove me villain—then a tale
Most contrary, a list of knightly deeds,
Virtues and graces, how I was beloved
By all the people. So perplexity
Shall wrinkle up long furrows in their brows,
And they shall turn in pitiful despair
My picture to consult. What shall they find?

The Portrait

A being unallied to all that's human,
A face with features cold, inanimate,
A blank refusal to their prying eye.
Thus bravely shall I thwart and puzzle them,
Unchanging, imperturbable, serene.
And if they choose, then blindly shall they choose
One or the other witness to believe—
Yea, with endeavour may advance so well
As, turning to the canvas once again,
To read therein the character they've chosen
And say the eyes are sinister and cruel,
Or generous and noble. Self-deceived,
They'll easily find others to delude.
For though more cautious, tempering the two,
Some call me neither villain absolute
Nor hero, little shall their words prevail:
Weak of imagination, men are fain
In all they see not present to their eyes
To revel in the fancy of extremes;
For otherwise the picture in their soul
Would live no more than this dead picture here.
So shall I still have friends and enemies,
Thinking in truth what people now pretend

To think me,—hero, villain. Yet my foe
Will scarcely feel me human, and my friend
Will never know me; though in hot dispute
They quarrel on the puzzle of my life,
Yet shall they feel I'm half their own creation.
While to the rest, who trouble not to seek
The record of my doings, I'll belong
To quite another world. My scarlet cloak
Braided with gold, my richly-jewelled collar,
Shall further help to make me mythical,
As fashion, faithful to her fine caprice,
Follows the law of change.
To live a life
Before the eyes of men, and yet to baffle
Their curiosity, within the soul
To lock the secret of the soul, to move
Encircled by a throng, yet be alone,
Not signalling our purpose in our face
But making it our servant to express
What mood we will, and to its native play
Entrusting nought that closely touches us,—
That were a life to live. But passion's force,
When fostered in recesses of the heart,

With hidden power unsatisfied, rebels :
And smothered in the showing, only burns
Fiercer by opposition, overcoming
At times the will that should be sovereign.
No longer then the barrier remains,
And those about me penetrate too deep.
'Tis thus my friends more than my enemies
I fear,—and fearing am more dangerous.
For even so the tyrant, like a flame,
Gives light and warmth to subjects who are wise
And venture not too near ; he visits them
With undiscerning favour, but the rash
Who seek to use him, flattering the while,
And closely dwell about him, he consumes.
Yet all this fear, because we cannot keep
Our secrets unavowed ! O vanity !
But where my art most fails of my desire,
There best the painter by his lack of art
Wins me success. No little crown I've won.
I thank thee, worthy artist, for the life
That I so long have laboured for in vain
I'll live for generations yet to come.
I thank thee, worthy artist. It is well.

THE WONDER SONG

All the world is full of wonder.
Seek not high and low to find.
Hark! her voice is like the thunder,
Calling out to humankind.

She exults in every motion,
Every tremor of the world,—
Where the battle of the ocean
On the tingling shore is hurl'd,

Where the spray of new life springing
Mocks decay, and death, and fear—
Hear ye not the sound of singing?
Come, deaf mortal, come and hear.

Hear the old triumphant pæan,
From the birth of ages sung,
Still through æon after æon
Calling! Still the world is young!

MOONLIGHT SONG OF THE FAIRIES

The evening dew has descended and decked
The leaf with its crystalline globe,
The moonlight is hovering, shadowy-flecked
In a silvery tremulous robe,
Through lacework of fluttering, whispering leaves,
To seek the soft-sloping recesses.

Here slumbers our queen and her white bosom heaves
In tranquillest sleep, and her tresses
Lie clustering brown on the green of the moss,
And gold where the swift-moving beam
Goes airily floating and dancing across,
And makes all it touches to gleam.

All silently dance we in fear to arouse
  Our queen from her shadow-light sleep,
Till, bright as the moon, we shall see o'er her brows
  The dawn of awakening creep.

CLIO AND MNEMOSYNE

Now broods the hush of twilight, vast and solemn,
Beneath the pillar'd canopy of pine :
Now through the rift that column makes with column
The vesper-lamps are hung in one long line
Of gold and crimson, filling Nature's shrine
With lustrous gloom. But hark ! in rolling thunder
Peals forth a voice that needs must be divine,
And the calm evening breath is rent asunder
By throbbings of an unimaginable wonder.

For brilliantly there dawned upon my sight
The vision of a mighty moving crowd,
And one sate in the midst, enrobed in light
Of dazzling noonday. And much people bowed

Awestruck before her. Beautiful and proud
Her head was crowned in a bright aureole;
Her radiance was unstained of any cloud.
So flamed her eyes, that like to living coal,
They seared a rapid way, deep in the human soul.

Clio was such: and as the glowing noon
Does with its gold-illumined sapphire render
More sorrowfully pale the wraith-like moon:
So sate one grey and faded by the splendour
Of that bright shape, enrobed in twilight's tender,
Mild slumber-shadows, which sweet revery
And dear remembrance of the dawn engender.
For now she lived through all eternity
In one long evening; such was Mnemosyne.

Past Clio's throne swept on a multitude,
The great ones of the earth. Her eyes aflame
Full swiftly all their rolling ranks reviewed.
She set their deeds of glory and of shame
In fadeless characters, with praise or blame

Allotted; now a conqueror she checked,
And now one great in peace: of them, whose name
Was lesser in the world, no whit she recked,
For warriors, statesmen, kings, that glittering circle decked.

They who had loved the madness of the fray,
They who had loved the bow and sword and lance,
They who had loved the pomp and revel gay,
The rose-crowned feast, the whirl of rapid dance—
All those she saw, all whomso beauty's glance
Onetime inspired the path of fame to dare;
And noble women of bright countenance,
And noble maidens wonderfully fair,
Who lit the world of yore, again shed lustre there.

But through her tears that made a misty veil
Mnemosyne beheld them; shades they seemed
Of stately, dark magnificence, and pale

With quiet or with toil their faces gleamed
Like half-enshadowed marble. On they streamed,
As round them twilight wove a silver net.
With half-shut melancholy eyes she dreamed
That all the glory of the earth was met
In that great host—the sun of all the world was set.

"A long, slow chill upon the earth has crept,"
She whispered sighing; "bitter winds congeal
The very tears of sadness I have wept,
And make them dull, and cold, and hard as steel
Cooled from the furnace; so they cannot heal
The wound that Time's fierce enmity hath dealt;
For men no longer chivalrously feel,
As in the olden days their father's felt;
A chill has gripped their hearts, which no warm showers can melt."

She ceased, and held her arms out yearningly
To clasp her vision of those vanished days,
Like one who in the darkness yearns to see
Yesterday's sun restore its cheering rays.
When lo! the languid lights behind the maze
Of tall pine-arches interlacing, sank:
And all the West was mingled in a haze,
And all the vision faded rank by rank:
'Twas night: dark-throated Earth the dewy
slumber drank.

TOWERS OF BABEL

"Let us build us a city and tower, whose top may reach unto heaven."—GENESIS.

O YEARN we to raise up a tower
  Whose top may reach the sky—
A tower engirded with power
  The power of Time to defy?

Yea, many with marble have wrought,
  Yea, many have wrought with gold;
And trash for treasure have bought,
  And treasure for trash have sold.

So Time in his pitiless power
  Will come; with scornful thrust
Will fling to ruin that tower,
  Will stamp it out in the dust.

Yet, reaching from earth to sky,
  Were towers of strength untold.
We passed them easily by—
  Our treasure for trash was sold.

CATHEDRAL MUSIC

I

I DREAM'D, and dreaming seemed again to see
Each pillar rising, like some stately tree
To meet the roof. The sacred place was dim
Save where the fading sunlight touched the rim
Of massy wood or stone and painted bright
Its sombre grey with glancing beams of light.
No sound was there: the silence of the vast,
Now twilight-shadow'd emptiness held fast
The awe-struck soul: still silence reign'd o'er all.
Anon sweet strains in rhythmic rise and fall
Thrill'd through with music pure the spacious fane,
Now booming loud, now whisp'ring low, as wane
The uproars of a busy throng, when word

Of evil tidings through the host is heard
And sudden grief strikes dumb: till now deep wrath
Finds voice, in sullen murmurs breaking forth,
And, swell'd by myriad voices, seeks the sky.
So rose the organ's thund'rous tones on high,
So did they sink and soften, so did die.

II

At length, but whence I knew not, nor could tell
For joy, the sound of many voices fell
On sleep-wrapt sense. Not earthly seem'd to be
The silver-gliding stream of harmony.
Nor earthly seem'd the place where now there rung
Immortal-sounding song from mortal tongue.
The organ seem'd to live. The very stone
Seem'd ever to my sleeping sense to groan
Or throb with joy in answer to each sound:
So did the music cast its spell around.
Deep notes and shrill in concord intertwine,

And rising, falling, flowing on, combine
In one grand song, and ever strangely sweet :
Now like the tune that rippling wavelets beat
Upon a sandy shore ; now like the plash
Of greater waves, which, driven by the lash
Of raging winds, give back defiance proud
Till the dread thunder of the surge breaks loud.

III

In those far lands of dappled sun and shade,
Where trees and flowers know not how to fade,
Where ancient poets in their legends tell
That birds with voices honey-sweet do dwell,
And wondrous music breathes from tree and palm :
E'en those entrancing sounds can have no charm
To equal this, to make the soul arise,
Soar far above the ken of mortal eyes,
And catch a glimpse of that dim future life,
Where peace is ever present, absent strife—
From thoughts of earth and human toils to cease,
And only dwell on glory and on peace.

II

Translations

FROM THE GREEK ANTHOLOGY

I

ARMED against Cupid am I, with the breastplate of reason about me,
Nor shall he conquer me now fighting alone against one.
Mortal, I'll brave an immortal, but if he have Bacchus to help him,
What can my prowess avail, fighting alone against two?

II

Once on a time Love did not see
That a bee
Had deep among the roses crept,
Where it slept—
So, sorely wounded in his finger
Did not linger,

But quickly to Cythera ran
And began,
"I perish, mother, from the stings
Of a tiny snake with wings.
Bee they call it at the farm."
"If the bee's sting so can harm,"
Smiling answered she, "what then
Of the sufferings of men
Whom *thy* dart
Causes smart?"

III

Then we bless thee, O cicada,
When from out the lofty tree-tops,
Of the dewy moisture sipping,
Like a king thou pourest music.
Thine is all that thou beholdest,
All thou seest in the country.
Thou art loved of every shepherd,
Thou art honoured among mortals,
Sweet-tongued herald of the summer.
Love is thine from all the Muses,

From the Greek Anthology

Love is thine from lord Apollo,
He that gave thee thy shrill music.
Age comes not thy life to weary,
Wise one, earth-born, free from trouble,
Well-nigh to the gods made equal.

CHORUSES FROM THE "ANTIGONE"

I

ll. 100-161

Ray of the sun, thou fairest light
Of all that yet have dawned to sight,
On seven-portal'd Thebé bright!
Late shone thy beam
O'er Dircé's stream,
O eye of golden-tinted day,
And put to flight
The Argive's might,
The white-clad warriors array,
Their haste to stir
With sharper spur
Upon the headlong homeward way.

Against our land the Argive came,
Urged by the sore-conflicting claim
Sought out in Polynices' name.
With clanging loud
An eagle proud

Choruses from the "Antigone"

He flew our country to consume,
With pinion dight
Of snowy white,
With myriad arms and floating plume.
'Tis so he falls
Upon our halls,
His spears athirst for blood and doom.

So there he ravening lay in wait
And circled round the city-gate,
But ere his jaws were satiate
With blood of ours,
And ere the towers
Fell victim to the torch-lit fire,
He fled in rout,—
While all about
High rose the din of Ares' ire.
The Theban's might
Is hard to fight,
The dragon is a foeman dire.

Zeus hates the high boast of the bold,
And sighted them fold upon fold
Flowing on with a clanging of gold :

Too proud they bore
The weapons of war,
And he hurl'd them down with brandish'd flame
From towers high,
When victory
Their lips were ready to proclaim.
The foe yet flash'd
The brand, as dash'd
And swung through space, to earth he came.

The same, whom but a moment past
The frenzied onset blindly cast
Upon us, while the stormy blast
Of hate and wrath
He breathéd forth;
But other was fate's recompense:
On many more
The god of war,
At our right hand a strong defence,
With crushing weight
A grievous fate
Did severally to all dispense

Choruses from the "Antigone"

At seven gates the foemen stayed;
In even force were they arrayed
By seven captains, yet they payed
To Zeus supreme
The brazen gleam
Of all their arms. Save two alone,
Those fated ones,
One father's sons
One mother's—who, to discord grown,
Their twin spears set,
Together met,
Together to one death are gone.

But,—for here doth Victory tread,
And her almighty name hath led
In Thebé many-charioted
One joyful paean,—
Let streams Lethean
Our memory of these wars confound,
And let our song
The whole night long
By all our Theban temples sound.

And lead along
Our dancing throng,
O Bacchus, shaker of the ground.

II

ll. 334-375

O naught is more wondrous than man, and wonders are many to tell,
For e'en o'er the grey-surging deep this power doth compass its way
In the storm-laden blast of the South, passing under th' enveloping swell.
And the highest of deities, Earth, unknowing of toil or decay
He works with the brood of the horse, and yearly consumeth away
As he turneth his ploughshare about.

He snareth and taketh in toils
The lightsome flock of the birds, and the beasts' wild race, and the brood

That habits the deep ocean brine, in his nets and his mesh-woven coils;
So cunning is man in his soul; and by his contrivance subdued
Is the beast that haunteth the wilds, and freely the mountain height scours.
And he tames and puts under the yoke the steed with its rough shaggy mane
And the tireless bull of the hills.

Himself hath he schooled in the powers
Of counsel as swift as the wind, of speech and that impulse of brain
Which mouldeth a state; and to shun the down-whirling shafts of the rain,
And the frost, when 'tis bitter to dwell 'neath the canopy clear of the sky,
For so all-contriving is man: and whatever the future may be
There lacks no contrivance in him. Of Death only in vain shall he try
To win his escape, and hath schemed from trackless disease to be free.

The Search for Loveliness

Man shews in his cunning of scheme
Strange shrewdness surpassing a dream,
And now to some evil he speeds,
Now turneth to glorious deeds :
Whoso honours his city's command,
Whoso keepeth the law of the land,
He swore he would ever uphold,—
His city shall stand : but the bold,
When guile doth abide in his heart,—
His city's no city : no part
Be his in my home, nor my thought
Be as his that wrongfully wrought.

III

ll. 781-799

Love unconquered in the fight,
  Love assailing human store,
Thou that keepest watch by night
  Maidens' tender cheeks before,
Thou that on the deep dost roam
And dwellest in the desert home.

None with thee may shun the fray,
God that never tastes of death,
Man whose life is but a day;
Sore thy presence maddeneth.
Thou dost draw the righteous soul
By paths of sin to ruin's goal.

This strife also thou didst sow,
Kinsman's strife. The fair bride's eye
Conquers with its passion-glow,
Rules,—as laws enthronèd high.
Aphrodite plays at will,
Goddess irresistible.

IV

ll. 1347-1353

A prudent heart
Is far, is far the chiefest part
Of god-sent happiness.
All whatsoe'er
Toucheth the gods, must man revere
And nevermore transgress.
For great blows smite

The proud of heart, and do requite
High-swelling speech.
'Tis they, 'tis they that teach
The agèd man at last to think aright!

LINES FROM THE "PROMETHEUS VINCTUS"

O DEEM not stubborn humours silence me;
But heaviness consumes my soul,—to see
Myself so vilely shatter'd in disgrace.
Yet on these very gods, this upstart race,
Who else than I in measure did bestow
Each sovran right? Enow of that; ye know
What I should tell. But hear the burden sore
On mortals laid, and how in times afore
They were insensate, till I gave them mind
And mastery of wit. Yet human kind
I shall not spurn in telling, but my love
In all I gave to them would only prove.
For men, though seeing, to no purpose saw,
Though hearing, yet in voices knew no law:
Like dream-begotten shadows all their days
Commingled all, and knew not how to raise
A brick-built house toward the sun, nor dealt
In works of wood. Like tiny ants they dwelt

The Search for Loveliness

In sunless cavern-deeps below the earth :
No certain sign had they of wintry dearth,
Of flowery spring or summer's fruitful load,
But all was wrought in darkness, till I show'd
To them the obscure settings and the rise
Of stars ; discovered figures to their eyes,
The crown of skill ; and taught them words to weave,
And ever keep the memories that conceive
All art. And first was I to lay the yoke
On savage beasts, and first their fury broke
With harness and with saddle, thus to free
Mankind, and of his hardest toils to be
The heir ; I put in cars the willing steed,
That prize of luxury whose stores exceed
In wealth. While sailors learnt from none but me
The flax-wing'd roving vessels of the sea.
Contrivance such I found, on man to shower,—
Unhappy, whose devices have no power
Myself to rid the superincumbent hour.

III

Light Verse

TO HIS LADY'S MIRROR

O HAPPY mirror, that can see
So oft my fair one smile!
For only frowns are turned on me,
Poor victim of her guile.

Is it your polish that I lack?
No, this in you must please.
You show her lovely features back,
While I can show—but these.

If for a moment you could tell,
(Oh, would that it were so!)
That Galatea's *not* a belle,
While Damon *is* a beau.

Why, then my heart would be more bold
Its passion to profess,
And she, methinks, would be less cold,
Might even answer "Yes."

What matter *then*, if she detect
  Your momentary art,
When life's true mirror shall reflect
  Our harmony of heart?

TO THE STARLING

(*A Poet bred, not born.*)

All hail to thee, O raucous-voiced musician!
Why do men scorn and poets shun thee,
starling?
Thou shouldest be, so great is thy ambition,
The poet's darling.

For thou dost keep no "native wood-notes
wild,"
And none have I, the would-be-famous poet.
Upon thy chattering pate abuse is piled:
I also know it.

And yet, in spite of all thy limitations,
Thou hast imposéd by a fraud colossal
On ornithologists thy imitations
Of the throstle.

Then one day may I have the blesséd fate
To practise on the critics such deception,
And, calm as thou, endure until that date
A hot reception.

Oh, teach the jangling tyro emulation,
For so some answering music may be stirred
And he too shine by borrowed inspiration,
O model bird!

MODERN ORATORY

Some were persuasive,
Oily, evasive;
Others hysterical,
Wild, and chimerical.
Some spoke prettily,
Some spoke wittily,
None to the point.

Some were for screening
Their genuine meaning
In wordy orations,
In conglomerations
Of sesquipedalian
Epithets, alien
Quite from the point.

Others, emphatic
And epigrammatic,

Enthusiastic
Supporters of drastic
Measures new-fangled,
Jabbered and jangled,
Quite without point.

Lastly a sensible,
Irreprehensible
Man, but appalling-
ly dull, began drawling
Truths without number ; *we*
Sank into slumber, *he*
Spoke to the point.

TASTE

Tastes differ; some are fairly safe to follow,
And when the tongues of others are at fault,
May show exactly what one ought to swallow,
And flavour'd with how large a grain of salt.

THE PRIVILEGE OF GREATNESS

"It was supposed there were certain rules, . . . to which certain licensed exceptions were to be allowed in the case of a man of exceptional genius."—ROMANES' *Lecture*, '09.

How dare you deny
My power to dye
My hair a coppery red?
When gingery copper
'S exactly the proper
Set-off to my style of head.

My heartiest curse on
The average person!
The average person I hate.
I claim to be built on
The pattern of Milton,
Or somebody equally great.

Your rubbishy rules
Are only for fools,

For the heterogeneous mass.
But really it's mad,
Nay, morally bad,
To fetter a genius. Ass ! !

"ANONYMOUS"

"ἀνώνυμοι θανόντες οὐ γελώμεθα."—EURIPIDES.

PHENOMENA
Be commoner
Than they have ever been;
Year after year
They reappear,
Perennial, evergreen.

Why! here's Teres-
-a knows her Cæs-
-ar at the age of five;
She will be, when
She reaches ten,
The greatest sage alive.

And here is John
Can play upon

"Anonymous"

The organ (he's aged two).
And there's—report
'll tell—no mort-
-al thing he cannot do.

Yes, save for me,
All men agree,—
The genius, the freak,
The ordinar-
-y Tom and Harr-
-y,—everyone's unique.

John Syke the dunce
Was like me once.
You mind his vacant squint.
His name was known
To me alone,
But *now* it's out in print.

A limerick
He won,—and sic

The Search for Loveliness

Itur ad astra. Fame!
Why! even I
Might deathless die,
If I would do the same.

No. I'm a prud-
-ent sleepy stud-
-ent such as hates a fuss
All fame I shun.
As I've begun,
I'll end, anonymous.

THE OXFORD TRAM

(There are persistent rumours that the horse-trams are to give place to electric-trams.)

1. *Present Time.*

I HEARD a dozen dons exclaim,
What! take our trams away!
These innovators have no shame,
Alas, alack-a-day!

Electric cars? delusions! shams!
A horse may not attain
Electric speed: but then a tram's
A tram, and not a train.

Discretion to the winds be flung!
We're ready for the fray.
Did we not save the Grecian tongue,
When Cambridge fell away?

So let them try to rob our friends
  Who dwell beside the Cam,
But learn that Oxford never bends—
  In short, we'll save our tram.

Oh ! long as English dons may speak
Their native tongue (their darling Greek)
  And set it for exams,
Though Cambridge play the traitor, *we*
From revolutions will be free
  And therefore keep our trams.

II. *About* 1950.

An airy population strayed
  Between the earth and sky :
For few on terra firma stayed,
  When every one could fly.

Yes. Babies flew across the blue
  In dirigible prams ;
But Oxford slept, for still she kept
  Her dignity and—trams.

III. *About* 2000.

O horrid plot! O blackest blot
On England's ancient fame!
Greek in exams no more, and trams
Nought but an empty name!

It is the witching hour of night.
Ah! what is that—that ghostly sight
That shivers through the gloom so white?
And hark! is that the hollow sound
Of horses' hoofs upon the ground?
That spectral figure—who is he?
Is it? it is—it cannot be—
Yes—the conductor at his post!
The tram has sent its angry ghost.

THE BEAU

ἀεροβατεῖ
down the High
καὶ περιφρονεῖ
τὸν ἥλιον.
And his eye
can scarce descry
aught but sky.
Ask him why,
and he'll reply,
unless he lie
like the Delian
oracle, "My
garments show
from top to toe."
You look, and lo!
A chameleon-
-coloured bow,
and waistcoat, oh!

The Beau

True, none would know
save from the glow
of raiment—no.
But he's a beau.

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